



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday - October 26, 2007

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FIVE ORLANDO INDIVIDUALS CHARGED WITH FEMA FRAUD

Acting U. S. Attorney James R. Klindt announced today that Nathan Bridges, age 44, Raymond Cutts III, age 52, Raymond Cutts IV, age 28, William Robinson, age 26, and Fayson Smith, age 26, have been charged with theft of government property for false claims that were submitted to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The individuals have been charged in criminal complaints. According to the affidavits for the criminal complaints, claims for disaster assistance were submitted to FEMA for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In those claims, it was represented that the five individuals were residents of Louisiana at the time that the hurricanes made landfall. As alleged in the criminal complaints, the five individuals were residents of Orlando at the time of the hurricanes and were not eligible for disaster assistance. Bridges, Cutts III, Cutts IV, and Smith have been arrested. Robinson has not yet been arrested. If convicted, the maximum penalty faced by the defendants is up to 10 years' imprisonment.

These cases were the result of a joint investigation by the United States Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General (OIG), the FEMA Florida Long-Term Recovery Office Fraud Prevention and Investigation Unit, the United States Postal Inspection Service, and the United States Secret Service, with assistance from the Orlando

Police Department.

“These arrests should send a strong message to anyone thinking about ripping off the taxpayers of this country,” said Scott R. Morris, director of FEMA’s Florida Long-Term Recovery Fraud Prevention and Investigation Unit. “We are adding staff and stepping up our efforts to catch anyone who committed or plans to commit FEMA fraud in Florida . When we catch you, you are headed to prison.”

These cases are just a few of the thousands that have been investigated by FEMA’s Florida Long-Term Recovery Fraud Prevention and Investigation Unit and the OIG. Through their joint efforts, the Unit and the OIG have targeted millions of dollars for recovery as part of a proactive effort to root out fraud. To date, the Unit and the OIG estimate that nearly \$4 million in unsubstantiated or unqualified FEMA claims have been rejected as a result of their work.

The Unit has an established toll-free fraud hotline, (866) 223-0814, along with an email address, StopFEMAFraud@dhs.gov , where suspected FEMA fraud may be reported.

These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Roger Handberg and Daniel Irick.

A criminal complaint is merely a charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.